

FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING

Aug 21, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the County Board was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Neil Hargis. This meeting was held in the Franklin County Courthouse, County Board Room 133, 100 Public Square, Benton, Illinois.

ROLL CALL

Secretary, Kevin Wilson, called the roll. Members in attendance were Angela Evans, John Gossett, Neil Hargis, Ray Minor, Curtis Overton, Kevin Weston and Brad Wilson. J. Larry Miller and Jack Warren were absent.

Also in attendance were Gayla Prather, County Board Office Manager; Sheriff Kyle Bacon; Ryan Buckingham, Director of Emergency Management Agency; Abby Dinn, States Attorney; Darla Fitzjerrells, Director of Court Services; Cindy Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments; Jim Muir, Circuit Clerk; Mike Rolla, County Engineer; Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer; and Tom Carter and Rocky Morris and other interested parties.

PLEDGE

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis lead everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis asked the public if there were comments at this time.

Tom Carter asked about the Forensic Audit, it was all started to find out what the bottom line was, where we had money, how much there was. Do we know that? Now how much is in each account? So, what did we accomplish with it? That is still pending? Well, I mean the main purpose was for us to know what we had to work with. And if that guy did not give it to us, then why are we paying him?

Ray Minor stated: Well, we went into a contract, but we had to pay the bill.

Tom Carter replied: Well that was not a contract to be where he got in depth enough to be able to tell us where we were at financially. But you have requested the forensic audit, correct?

Ray Minor asked: You've made a FOIA?

Tom Carter replied: Yes. Yeah. Okay. And next thing I agree with Mr. Gossett on the detention facility, you are just kicking the can down the road and it is more and more cost. Any money spent on that facility needs to be transferable to where we used for a federal facility and however way we got to get there, whether it is due referendum and everything, the way we need to go. Thanks.

Rocky Morris asked: My question pretty much from the audit, I got a copy of the letter that Chairman Miller wrote. Was the board involved in the process of establishing the guidelines for the audit? Can I ask that question?

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated: I think you can ask. Yeah.

Rocky Morris stated: Anyway. A lot of information I have been involved in forensics and had them explained to me. It seems to me like during a forensic, you have team members come in and do interviews with like Steve department heads. It is like an F B I agent sitting there asking you Questions. Did we have that? Was anybody interviewed by a forensic audit or no answer? I really don't mean to put you on the spot, but this is a joke. It really is. I asked Steve the other day if he had ever been interviewed. It was his office. Steve, was you interviewed and how?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer stated: I had a phone conversation with him. Yes.

Rocky Morris stated: The way this whole process, and I think some of you was not even involved, which is b. s., excuse my language, I usually said the real word, but I did not. I mean that for a board to function because it seemed like, and the reason I asked this is with the letter that I got, everybody is welcome to look at it. All the information was being submitted to Larry Miller and his email private email right there. So, if he is getting the information from the auditor, are you guys being left out? And I do not think he has got special privileges as a chairman, let alone to write this letter that he sent, which says what the 21-audit said. And Steve and I have talked about that. There was Amy in the 2021 audit that was highlighted by the auditor that needed to have corrections. And you got who's everyone here now? You've got a copy of that audit. I'm sure. So, I think we just spent, and I will say this, Steve, I do not think there was one person that thought anything was going on. Mr. Miller was asking the questions and couldn't get answers.

Brad did it. Other members of this board asked the questions for balances, couldn't get an answer, but you were in the process. We had personnel going, have we got those answers? Like Tom said, do we know what the balances are or if we take \$65,000 and burn it.

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis asked any other public comment? Okay.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Kevin Weston made a motion to accept the minutes of the July 20, 2023 Regular County Board Meeting. Angela Evans seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

COUNTY CLAIMS

Ray Minor made a motion to pay the claims on file. Curtis Overton seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**FRONTAGE VARIANCE
FOR BRANDON
HUTCHCRAFT - APPROVE**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the first item on the agenda is the approval of the Frontage Variance for Brandon Hutchcraft. Anybody has any further discussion on that?

Brad Wilson made a motion to approve the frontage variance as presented. Ray Minor seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said frontage variance is made a part of these minutes.

**CIRCUIT CLERK -
SPACE SAVER FOR
COURTHOUSE BASEMENT
- APPROVE**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of the space saver for the courthouse basement for the Circuit Clerk's office from Conner Business Systems Inc in Ellisville, Missouri. Curtis Overton informed the County Board that up to \$85,000 coming from 50% from Mr. Muir's office and 50% of total bill from 1% monies. File moving and finalizing costs to be determined.

John Gossett made a motion to approve the space saver for the courthouse basement. Brad Wilson seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

The invoice / contract is made a part of these minutes.

**CORONER'S FACILITY -
PURCHASE OF COOLER
WITH ARPA FUNDING -
APPROVE**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval to purchase of a cooler for coroner's facility. And this would be with ARPA funding in the amount of \$17,600.

Curtis Overton made motion to approve the purchase of cooler as presented. Angela Evans seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**JUVENILE DETENTION
CENTER RENOVATIONS -
ITEMS REQUESTED
USING ARPA FUNDING -
APPROVE**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval for items requested for juvenile detention center renovation. Again, this would be ARPA funding.

John Gossett made a motion to table is item.

Ray Minor stated: I make a motion to vote on it. I got some more comments to make.

Brad Wilson stated: I second that all.

Ray Minor added: Just a, add a couple of things here. I think the juvenile detention center has got a bad rap over the last six years. And to piggyback on what our public comments are, we have no clue what the juvenile detention center balance is because we have got records that show before our current treasurer came into office, they were making money and had a positive balance. And then within two months they no longer had it anymore. And if you look at the total amount of money, we are talking about the 7.5% of our ARPA money, the TVs alone that everybody, you guys get a big all upset over nickel and dime stuff. We're talking about 0.06% for six TVs of our ARPA money. I make a motion to repair it the bills, pay them.

John Gossett stated: Are we violated rules of order? I put a motion out there and no one seconded. I don't think it was given time to be second. Okay.

Mr. Clerk, have we violated rules of orders?

Kevin Wilson County Clerk replied: Yes sir.

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated: Motion? To table Yes. We will wait a second.

We have a second on my table? Do not. Okay.

Ray Minor asked: Did I make a motion?

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis replied: Yes, you did.

Brad Wilson stated: I will second. And I would like to add to the discussion again, whether it is going to be a juvenile detention center or it's going to turn into something else. You cannot have

a facility that houses inmates or offenders or whatever you want to call 'em. If you do not have locking mechanisms, if you do not have cameras, if you do not have those things, therefore you cannot have a jail. We don't need another storage building that size to just sit there and let it dilapidated. These things are pertinent for use for a juvenile detention center or for a jail. So, we must or decide to not have facility. Whatever you are going to do with it, you must have these things and the way that we are spending the ARPA money right now, if we wait until later till we close the doors, I do not see this happening to money to do this front.

Kevin Wilson, County Clerk asked: Mr. Minor, please clarify your dollar amount, sir.

Curtis Overton replied: The dollar amount would be \$300,529 99 cents, which is what the detention center people estimated.

Kevin Wilson County Clerk replied: Thank you.

Ray Minor made a motion to approve items requested for juvenile detention center renovation. Brad Wilson seconded the motion. On roll call vote, the voting was as follows: Angela Evans, John Gossett, Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis, and Curtis Overton voting NO and Ray Minor, Kevin Weston and Brad Wilson voting YES. The motion was voted down with four NO's and three YES's.

**FORENSIC AUDIT
REPORT - APPROVAL**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of the Forensic Audit Report. There was no discussion.

Ray Minor made a motion to approval of the Forensic Audit Report as presented. John Gossett seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said Forensic Audit report is made a part of these minutes.

**RELEASE CLOSED
SESSION MINUTES -
APPROVAL**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval to release closed session minutes. Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis informed the County Board in the past, we have voted to keep those closed and I would recommend that we do the same this time, a motion to keep them closed.

Angela Evans made a motion to keep them closed, not to release. Kevin Weston seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**DESTROY CLOSED
SESSION TAPES -
APPROVAL**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval to destroy closed session tapes. Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis commented - I think that one is self-explanatory.

Ray Minor made a motion to destroy the session tapes. Kevin Weston seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**TANAGER ROAD BRIDGE
- RESOLUTION
AWARDING CONTRACT**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the resolution awarding contract for Tanager Road Bridge section 21-11132-00-BR to the low bidder Dees, Inc. in West Frankfort.

Kevin Weston made a motion to approve the resolution as presented. Curtis Overton seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said resolution is made a part of the minutes as Resolution No. 2023-17.

**PROCEED WITH
REFERENDUM FOR
JUVENILE DETENTION
CENTER**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is to proceed with referendum for Juvenile Detention Center.

John Gossett stated: I make motion we proceed Referendum. It is referendum for the juvenile detention center.

Angela Evans replied: I will second.

Brad Wilson stated: One point of discussion I would like to ask is are we going to have a committee for this referendum that discusses said referendum with entities within the county, the courthouse, there was a lot of work that went in on that referendum of a committee going to meetings and explaining what our intentions are. Are we going to have a committee that does that, that gets that information to the public?

John Gossett stated: How we mentioned that do this. What it really is a reverse referendum. The attorneys left, but she says that is the only way to legally do this. We have to do a reverse referendum. I guess we will call it reverse deal. But the reverse and all it is going to say, I have a copy that to you last time.

We will say something like we are going to let the county board decide use of this building, but we are going to keep the tax on it to have it paid for, but we got to pay for it, but once paid for that percent falls off.

Brad Wilson stated: Correct. Well, I think what we're going to have to make clear when we talk to the public is what our intentions are of the building. Not just telling them it is now our building. We must have a purpose.

John Gossett stated: If we put a purpose on referendum or it called a resolution, if we do that, we are locked in a second time to what we can do with our building. For example, if we tell we're going to use it for adult females for the federal system and it falls through, they don't give us enough females. Now, once again, we must do a reverse referendum to be out it. But if we put it in our hands, we can use it as we wish.

Hopefully that will ever cure this.

Angela Evans stated: There's nothing wrong with that result of saying, hey, we want to do, we are looking, you turn it over to the county board.

This is our proposal of what we want to do with it. And this is how much we feel like for the federal inmates. We are going to draw in more revenue.

Brad Wilson stated: It could be in our discussion. That does not have to be set in concrete, but the public's going to want to know some ideas that we have for the building in that committee.

Angela Evans stated: Get the ideas out to the public. But then we leave the ideas off the actual ballot.

Ray Minor stated: And we will go to the public and show them what our financial records are, how we have no idea the standing of that building. Are we going to do that? Because we really don't know whether the thing's made money or lost money.

John Gossett stated: We know we owe 1.3 million and we still must pay that in order to get the building. That is all I know.

Brad Wilson stated: That is true. But to Ray's point, and I handed that out a couple of meeting ago.

Ray Minor stated: We keep talking about the fact that it is losing money, but we really cannot show that it is making money, and we have one department head saying one thing. We have another department head saying another thing.

Angela Evans stated: Well, I know we must be losing money. We went from 36 beds to seven, so they were losing money somewhere.

John Gossett stated: We went from having a balance of \$286,875 and 69 cents on four 30 of 19 by 10 31 of 19. Within six months we went to a negative balance of \$126,633 81 cents. Basic math says

something like, I do not Dunno \$400,000 dollars I do not know where it went, I cannot explain that. You elaborate. I cannot.

Ray Minor stated: That nobody can.

Brad Wilson stated: And that is going to be the problem that we have. And we make these records public and we let public see that is they're going to want to know how did you lose \$400,000 in six months? But we cannot explain that.

Ray Minor stated: And when at the time we had a chief judge that was saying those numbers were not accurate.

Brad Wilson stated: And I have been told those numbers are not accurate at the current moment.

Angela Evans stated: And the print reports still do not show anything either.

Vice-Chairman Neil Evans stated: I am not against like you said putting a committee together, but obviously that would be up to Chairman Miller.

Kevin Weston stated: I just think we proceed with the motion.

We have not voted right.

Kevin Wilson, County Clerk stated: Have not voted. No sir.

John Gossett made a motion to proceed with referendum for Juvenile Detention Center. Angela Evans seconded the motion. On roll call vote all voted yes except for Ray Minor voted no. The motion passed six YES's to one NO.

NOVACOM - 1% FUNDING Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the claim and invoice for NovaCom for the panic buttons install, setup and test at the Campbell Building offices, Justice Center and Animal Control in the amount of \$8,519.32.

Ray Minor made a motion to pay the claim as presented. Curtis Overton seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said claim & invoice are made a part of these minutes.

**D & C SHEET METAL -
1% FUNDING**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the claim and invoice for D & C Sheet Metal installed a sterling 105 K BTU Unit Heat for truck barn in the amount of \$3,174.00.

Ray Minor made a motion to pay the claim as presented. Curtis Overton seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said claim & invoice are made a part of these minutes.

**FW ELECTRIC - 1%
FUNDING**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the claim and invoice for FW Plumbing for plumbing at the Juvenile Detention Center for May Maintenance in the amount of \$2,107.11.

Ray Minor made a motion to pay the claim as presented. Curtis Overton seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said claim & invoice are made a part of these minutes.

**HART CANTRELL LLC -
1% FUNDING**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the claim and invoice for Hart Cantrell LLC for title commitment for the 911 Project in the amount of \$750.00.

Ray Minor made a motion to pay the claim as presented. Curtis Overton seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said claim & invoice are made a part of these minutes.

**FW ELECTRIC - 1%
FUNDING**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the claim and invoice for FW Electric for the Juvenile Detention Center HVAC / Plumbing and Electrical July Maintenance in the amount of \$13,780.46.

Ray Minor made a motion to pay the claim as presented. Curtis Overton seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said claim & invoice are made a part of these minutes.

**MT VERNON TV &
APPLIANCE CENTER -
1% FUNDING**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the claim and invoice for Mt. Vernon TV & Appliance Center for the Juvenile Detention Center purchase of two washers for \$4,112.27 and two dryers for \$1,345.76 with a total amount of \$5,458.03.

Ray Minor made a motion to pay the claim as presented. Curtis Overton seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said claim & invoice are made a part of these minutes.

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
HOUSING AUTHORITY -
1 APPOINTMENT**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is an appointment to the Franklin County Housing Authority Board and put forth Curtis Overton to continue that for another five year term ending September 1, 2028.

Kevin Weston made a motion to reappoint Curtis Overton the Franklin County Housing Authority Board. Brad Wilson seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
HOSPITAL BOARD - 3
APPOINTMENTS**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda are three appointments to the Franklin County Hospital Board and he informed the County Board that this will need to be tabled at this time.

**MINER'S CEMETERY OF
ROYALTON - 2
APPOINTMENTS**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda are two appointments to the Miner's Cemetery of Royalton Board and he informed the County Board that this will need to be tabled at this time.

**MOSQUITO ABATEMENT
BOARD - 2
APPOINTMENTS**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda are two appointments to the Mosquito Abatement Board and he informed the County Board that this will need to be tabled at this time.

**PLUMFIELD WATER
DISTRICT - 2
APPOINTMENTS**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda are two appointments to the Plumfield Water District Board and he informed the County Board that this will need to be tabled at this time.

**U OF I EXTENSION
BOARD - 1
APPOINTMENT**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is an appointment to the U of I Extension Board and he informed the County Board that this will need to be tabled at this time.

**COUNTY CLERK,
CORONER & SHERIFF**

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated the next item on the agenda are the July, 2023 monthly reports from the Franklin County Clerk, Franklin County Coroner and Sheriff.

Brad Wilson made motion to approve the reports as presented. Curtis Overton seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said reports are made a part of these minutes.

CLOSED SESSION

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is a closed session to discuss personnel.

Kevin Weston made a motion at 6:38 p.m. to go into closed session. Brad Wilson seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**RETURN TO OPEN
SESSION**

Kevin Weston made a motion at 7:01 p.m. to resume to the open meeting. Curtis Overton seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis asked the Board if there were any questions. Curtis Overton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Brad Wilson seconded the motion. There being no further business Vice-Chairman Neil Hargis declared the meeting adjourned.



Neil Hargis
Interim Chairman



Kevin Wilson
County Clerk and Recorder